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The EXAMINER.

From Friday October 23, to Monday October 26, 1713.

Corruptio optimi eſt peſſima.

NOW the *Whigs* have loſt the Power of hurting the *Church*, they give out many alluring Promiſes, how much they would do for Her, were they once admitted into Power again. Some of their *Writers* are taught to improve this Hint, to enlarge upon their generous Concurrence in the Affair of the *Occaſional Bill*, to aſſure the World, that they have dropt their old Allies, the *Diſſenter*, *Deiſt*, *Socinian* and *Free-thinker*, and are ready to come into any Meaſures for ſecuring the *Church* in the Poſſeſſion and Exerciſe of Her undoubted Rights; but that She has been pleaſed to neglect them, and apply to other Friends; and they would inſinuate, that there are Men now in Employ, who are either Cold to Her Intereſts, out of Principle, or Jealous of her Glory, for ſelfiſh Ends, leſt She ſhould Rival them in Dominion, and come to Juſtle Her Benefactors in the ſecular Branch, to which their *Order*, as they are of the *Laity*, hath confin'd them, and in which (as theſe People tell us) their Ambition takes up ſo much room, that they cannot make way for any other Partners in Power but Themſelves. It would be worth the while to make an Experiment of theſe Speculations; and both *Parties* might gain by the Tryal; at leaſt the *Church*, for whoſe ſake both of them pretend to be deeply engag'd, would reap great Advantages by it, if Matters were brought to an Iſſue, and a fair Propoſal offer'd, which might ſoon determine the Queſtion, whether the *Whigs* are ſincere in their Affections for the *Church*, or whether the Proviſion, neceſſary to be made for Her Welfare and Security, ſticks with the *Preſent Miniſtry?* I will therefore leave the general Project between them, as being very indifferent who propoſes it firſt to the *Legiſlature*, and equally willing to determine in Favour of that Intereſt, which is moſt hearty and forward to eſpouſe this Cauſe. By the Turn this Affair takes, let my Fellow-Subjects judge, whether the *Whigs* have not accuſed the *Tories* wrongfully, when they charge them with Diſregard to the Church; and whether they are not great Hypocrites themſelves, when they pretend to have Repented of former Errors, and to be entirely reconcil'd to that tender, indulgent *Mother*.

The Reverend and Learned Dr. *Gibſon*, of *Lambeth*, hath, with great Labour and Exactneſs, collected together in Two *Volumes* in *Folio*, the *Canons*, *Conſtitutions*, *Rights*, *Privileges* and *Immunities* of the *Church* of *England*: Which *Books* are now publiſh'd, to the great Satisfaction of our Clergy, who had proportion'd their Expectations of that Work, to the great Uſefulneſs of the Undertaking, and the eſtabliſh'd Character of the *Compiler*. In theſe Pieces we may clearly ſee, at one View, all that the *Church* of *England* at preſent enjoys, or may legally claim for Her Property; and which the Wiſdom of our Anceſtors thought neceſſary to Her Subſiſtance and Well-being, as She is a *Society*, diſtinct from, and yet in very cloſe Alliance with, the State. Upon a full Examination of her preſent Circumſtances, it will appear, that there is a great deal of difference between Her rightful Power, and the due Exerciſe of it; that She may claim divers Rights, which She is not ſuffer'd to enjoy; and that many of Her *Canons* and *Spiritual Laws* are utterly uſeleſs, and merely ſpeculative, tho' the Iniquity of the Times affords many Occaſions for putting them in Execution: So that if a ſpeedy Remedy be not provided, the ſame Fate may attend moſt of Her *Statutes*, which has often accompanied thoſe of the Realm: By *Sleeping* too long, they may be taken to be as fully *Repealed*, as if they had paſſed under a Law for that purpoſe; and as void of all force, as if they had never been *Made* and *Enacted*.

It is a very great Reflection upon our Government, that the *Pureſt Church* in the World ſhould have the leaſt Power and Privilege, and be thought the moſt Unworthy to have any conſiderable Truſt repoſed in Her. Certainly it is of no ſmall Conſequence to us, conſidering the mutual Dependence between her and the State, that ſhe ſhould be ſuffer'd to ſtand ſo long upon no other Baſis, than only the Favour of the Secular Law, her ſuppoſed Rival, a Law at leaſt as much ſubject to Revolutions, as the Government, and the great Piety, Learning and Abilities of the Perſons, who now compoſe her ſeveral *Orders*; who yet, with regard to thoſe Perfections, muſt, like other Bodies of that Nature, be in a continual *Flux*, and State of Mortality. There is not a *Reformed Clergy* or *Proteſtant Church* in *Europe*, which is not truſted with the free Exerciſe of more Power than the *Church* of *England*; tho' ſhe is own'd to be the Glory of the *Reformation*, and the greateſt Friend to the State, in whoſe Boſom ſhe has taken Shelter, of any other Religious Communion; having generouſly borne a part in all its Sufferings, and been highly Inſtrumental in all its Deliverances. The Compariſon between us and the Churches of the *North*, gives the Balance ſo much to their Side, that our Enemies will not hear of any Propoſals upon the Foot of thoſe Models. The *Dutch* and *Genevan Churches*, tho' lodg'd in the Hands of a *Clergy*, far inferior to ours, in all the Qualifications belonging to a *Sacred Order*, do yet approach much nearer the *Original Inſtitutions* of *Calvin*, than our *Church* does to the *firſt Plan* laid down by our *Bleſſed Reformers*. The *Church* of *Ireland*, our younger Siſter, enjoys many Privileges, which are only to be found among us, in the dead Letter of *obſolete Canons*, and the *Hiſtorical Journals* of *paſt Convocations*. Even that of *Scotland*, tho' it be miſerably fallen from thoſe Fundamental Principles, upon which it was at firſt *Reformed*, does yet, in point of Order and Diſcipline, come up to many of thoſe Severities, which our *Southern Proteſtants* do not ſo much as wiſh to imitate, out of reſpect to a free and happy People: And yet the *Whigs* plead for the Eſtabliſhment of theſe Innovations; and under their Management and Direction, they became a heavy unalterable Entail upon Poſterity. But what moſt provokes our Wonder and Reſentment, is to ſee the *Diſſenting Clergy*, whoſe Schemes ſubſiſt only by our *Indulgence*, and fall vaſtly ſhort of an *Eſtabliſhment*, work themſelves into the full Enjoyment of many more Privileges, than the *Clergy* of the *Church* of *England* have of late attempted to regain; and which, becauſe the *Law* hath not been pleaſed to give them, therefore every Endeavour in them after any of thoſe Privileges, which their Enemies enjoy without any Title to them, and themſelves are debarr'd of, in direct Violation of a rightful, tho' an ancient, *Claim*, is call'd Spiritual Tyranny and Oppreſſion, and branded with the odious Name of *Popery*. Thus it fares at preſent with the Poor *Church* of *England*. Her Enemies inſult her every Day, becauſe ſhe has no Power; and her Wayward Sons complain, that ſhe has too much. This Juncture therefore affords a noble Opportunity for the *Whigs*, if they really Love her, to exert themſelves in her Favour. This ſeems to be the *Day, in which ſhe ſhall be ſpoken for*; and if they are aſham'd to open any of thoſe Mouths in her behalf, which formerly ſpit their Venom againſt her, they may employ ſome of their ableſt *Church-Whigs*, ſome of thoſe diſaffected *Renegadoes*, now liſted in their Service, who have not yet rebated of their Zeal for the *Church*, to begin the Debate, for her further Security and Glory.

Whilſt other *Churches* and *Religious Societies*, whether *Eſtabliſh'd* or only *Tolerated*, enjoy both an *Executive*

and

and a *Legislative* Power: and find these necessary to their very Being and Existence, as they are *Societies*, it is impossible but the *Church* of *England* must in time run to Decay, be torn to Pieces with *Schisms* and *Heresies*, and in the next *Turn* or *Change* of Affairs, be either wholly ruined, or melted down into one of those imperfect Plans, which are now growing up under her Shade, and striving to over-top her in Strength and Beauty. But this Claim and Demand, however just in it self, the *Church* seems very willing to wave at present, and labours only to regain the free Exercise of her *Executive Power*, tho' not in so ample a manner as the same is enjoy'd by her *Protestant* Neighbours. Whoever will fully peruse the *Account* of what pass'd in the *Last Convocation*, must readily come into the Justice of her Complaints; and when he sees how Indulgent the *Queen* was to that *Reverend Body*, how ready to assist them with her *Prerogative*, how Tender the *Legislature* and *Ministry* were of the *Church*'s Rights, and how willing to assist Her in their Secular Capacities, how strenuously the *Clergy* labour'd to do their Order Justice, and how Just and Equitable the *Courts* of *Westminster-Hall* were in asserting their *Rights*, and laying before them the true State of those Priviledges which the Law had given them a just Claim to, will find good reason to be surpriz'd, that so many noble Designs for promoting the Interest of Religion should miscarry; that a *Party* should be able to Defeat, whatever these Powers, in Conjunction, had Projected for the Good of the *Church*; and that the same Men, who, when they found themselves too weak to oppose the *Orthodox Clergy*, and the honest Cause in which they were engaged, were forced to throw the *Convocation* and all its Interests into the Hands of a Corrupt Arbitrary *Junta*, should now find Strength enough to bear up, and support themselves, with the Weight of a *Faction*, against both *Court* and *Church* united, against the Secular and Temporal Powers, all combining to restore the *Clergy* to the Enjoyment of their antient Rights, and making them Instrumental in the Reformation of a degenerate People, miserably corrupted both in Principle and Practice.

It may not be improper to take a View of the several *Heads of Business*, recommended to that *Convocation* by *Her Majesty*, in *Her* most Gracious *Letters* and *Messages*: And these are in order as follows.

1. The Drawing up a *Representation* of the *Present State* of *Religion*, &c.
2. The regulating Proceedings in *Excommunications*, &c.
3. The preparing a *Form of Prayer* for *Prisoners*, *Converts*, &c.
4. The establishing *Rural Deans*, where they are not, and rendring them more useful, where they are.
5. The making Provision for Preserving and Transmitting more *Exact Terriers*.
6. The regulating of *Licenses for Matrimony*, according to *Canon*, and preventing *Clandestine Marriages*.

Besides these Matters, more specially recommended to them by *Her Majesty*, the *Lower House* went upon other *Heads of Business*, of great Use to Religion. As,

1. The Draught of a *Canon* and *Act of Parliament*, for encouraging of *Charity-Schools*.
2. The building of *Fifty new Churches*, in and about the *Cities* of *London* and *Westminster*, so much wanted there. *Upon which Head, Application was made to the* House *of* Commons, *which had the desir'd Effect.*
3. The Censuring and Condemning of several Notoriously Heretical Positions published by *William Whiston*.
4. A *Form of Consecration* for *Churches* and *Chappels*.

These several *Articles* are of such Consequence to *Christianity* in general, so necessary to the Security and Improvement of the *Reform'd Religion*, so conducive to the Establishment and Welfare of the *Church* of *England*, of such admirable Use in the well-Government of the whole Body of the *Clergy*, so exactly Conformable to the best Patterns of *Primitive Religion*, and so considerable a part of that *Church-Discipline*, which we all pray, and I hope sincerely, in the excellent Language of our most *Holy Liturgy*, may be *Restored among us*, that it is really very surprizing, and must shock the Belief, as well as distract the Thoughts, of the most Pious Men, to consider, with what a slighting Coldness and Indifference, these Articles were receiv'd, and to find that every one of them miscarried, in a way so extraordinary, as not yet to be throughly accounted for. Our Wonder increases, when we see those Men give up these Important Matters for the sake of a few *unnecessary Forms and Ceremonies*, who had been justly suspected of an Inclination to give up the most *necessary Ceremonies* to those, who are without the *Pale*, and persist in an *unreasonable Separation* from us.

Here then is a plain Handle given to the *Whigs*, to exert themselves in Favour of the *Church*. For the Persons, who are warmest and most resolute in this Controversy, have concern'd themselves so very deeply in that Interest, that there is no manner of Doubt, but they will, as they have hitherto done, suffer themselves to be lead and directed in their future Conduct, by the same infallible *Lay-Guides* and *Elders* of the *Junta*. There are, it must be own'd, many Men of Eminence and Figure, among both the *Clergy* and *Laity*, who have wrought themselves into the Favours of the *Whigs*, and gotten Countenance and Preferment under them, by openly attacking the *Ecclesiastical Constitution*, and finding fault with her *Creeds*, *Articles*, *Homilies* and *Canons*. I need not Point out the *Men*, or their *Works*; the *Whigs* know them both very well, they have found them always true and firm to their Party, and it is for the Sheltering and Skreening these Criminals, that they have made such a considerable Stand against the Orthodox *Clergy*. But now if they would be thought sincere, they must disown these old Friends, and either oblige them to write their own Confutation, or surrender them up to *Synodical Justice*. But after all, these Matters may be accomodated upon very easie Terms: It has been said, and I believe with too much Justice, that the whole Cause, both of *Church* and *Convocation*, is suspended on the account of a *single Member*, who is forc'd to head a Party, as *Arrius* did of old, and embarrass all Affairs, for fear his own Works and Tenets, upon the Restoration of Church-Government and Discipline, should be the first to fall under those Censures, which they have most eminently deserved. For what Reasons any *Protestant Church* should be over-fond of a Man, who has distinguish'd himself in the Defence of *Contradiction*, and given Proofs of his readiness to resort to the See and *Court* of *Rome*, for proper Measures, with regard to the *English Constitution*, I am yet to seek: This I verily believe, that the *Church*, in which he was born and bred, would, in a Dispute of this Nature, have left him with a good deal more of decent Ceremony, than ever he left his *First Mother*. I shall find a Time to press this Argument with more Vehemence and Zeal, the nearer the Season approaches to the Meeting of the next *Convocation*. Give me leave, in the mean while, only to observe in general, that unless something be done for the *Church*, in this extraordinary Case and favourable Juncture, our Divisions will still Reign, and we never shall be an united People, till *Confusion* hath brought us into *Order*. For most of our Controversies are now grown Stale, and will not bear another Hearing, without running into Tautology: It is therefore high Time for the *Judge of Controversies* to interpose. Nor is there any other way left, whereby we can hope to put a stop to the Growth of *Vice* and *Immorality*, revive those Virtues, which keep up *Justice* and *Humanity* among Men, or restore that *Love of our Country*, regard for the *Constitution*, and *Loyalty* to *Her Majesty*, or any other *Prince*, who shall succeed *Her*, which is necessary to the very Being either of *New* or *Old England*. For it is Nonsense to think, that what makes the *Present Reign* Uneasy, can ever Secure the *Succession*.

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